

ance which in your hour of need, was so liberally rendered to you—but I invoke you by every consideration of justice and gratitude—by every memory of the past, to leave us that, without which, we are “poor indeed.”

Besides the objections already urged, I am further opposed to the proposition of the gentleman from Washington, now under discussion, because it contains the principle of a “federal basis” as one of its chief and leading features. By so doing, it virtually deprives southern and eastern Maryland of a large portion of its population in the representative system offered for our adoption—and thus, directly inflicts an additional deep and serious wound. I am aware that a similar provision is incorporated in many of the southern Constitutions where slavery is fully recognized—and that a precedent perhaps still more distinguished may be found in the Constitution of the United States. The reasons, however, for the insertion of such a “basis” in the federal compact, must, with a very little reflection, become evident to all. The parties to that high and solemn contract came, in many instances, from the very extremes of our vast country—from communities living under different institutions, and with widely different associations, characteristics and feelings. They met in that august conclave as the representatives of independent sovereignties, with none other than a moral obligation resting upon them. They treated with each other as with peers and equals; disconnected and disunited; bound by no other tie than that which originated from a common interest—linked by no other feeling than that which sprang from a common sympathy. Harmony and peace were essential to their councils—and much very much of local jealousy and prejudice from all sections, was laid as a sacrificial holocaust upon the common altar, that their grave deliberations might be crowned with a glorious triumph. The very genius of compromise seemed to imbue every mind and pervade every heart in that memorable assembly and under its benign and happy influence, the peculiar basis, known as the “federal basis,” in common with many other features similarly compromising in their character was made part of that great organic law, under which a nation was born, and has since soared to an eminence from which it may look down upon all the powers and kingdoms of the earth. Such briefly is the history of this peculiar measure—and with such events fresh in our recollection, it would seem difficult for any intellect, however cunningly armed with the weapons of sophistry, to draw any analogy between the circumstances which then gave it being and those which now exist within our borders. We are not here as strangers, reared under the influence of hostile and conflicting teachings. We are children of the same destiny; animated with the same State love and the same State pride. Property in all its various forms is recognized precisely alike in every quarter amongst us. We are all attached, or professed to be attached to the institution of slavery as it necessarily exists in our midst—and we watch, with a suspicious eye,

every encroachment upon that interest, from whatever source it comes. However much we differ upon other subjects, upon this one surely we seek no compromise. Allegany, Washington, Frederick, Carroll, Baltimore, Harford, Cecil, and Baltimore city, are said to be as sound upon this domestic feature as the heart or southern extremity of the State. Why then desire to establish a basis which by diminishing the representation of those counties where the institution chiefly exists, would seem at least to that extent to injure its influence and weaken its power.

The constitutions of other States may, in truth, have this provision engrafted upon them, but, in my judgment, the *condition and situation of our own State, externally and internally*, affords a subject of far more profitable study than all the constitutions and all the States of the Union beside. I am fully aware that I am treading upon delicate ground. I do not believe the anti-slavery sentiment seriously pervades any section of Maryland. I do not believe the atmosphere which we breathe is yet tainted with any such unwholesome impurity, but the fact cannot and should not be disguised that under the amendment now offered to our consideration, the majority of power in the popular branch of the General Assembly is no longer in the hands of those counties which may be said to be identified with the slave interest in the most eminent degree. Time, in its untiring pace, creates many a change, and it may be that the demand for a “purely white basis,” now scarcely urged, will ere long be swollen into a wild and desperate cry that shall, when too late, wake a trusting and confiding people from that repose in which they are now indulging. Sir, the period in which we live is ominous. Yesterday, as it were, a dark cloud, like a pall, overhung the entire Union—threatening its very existence. Wisdom and patriotism, and moral courage combined, turned the frantic commotion aside. And now the hoarse mutterings of its thunder, or rather the demonical yelling of its baffled rage, is heard passing away in the far off North. Let us, then, deal cautiously and tenderly with a subject fraught with so much delicacy and importance. We are a border State—the eyes of sister communities are anxiously watching us—and now, if ever we should meet their gaze with unyielding firmness, let our action be such as will inspire all within and without our limits with undoubting confidence—such as will be, in every respect, worthy of our past and present reputation.

But there is another grave objection to the amendment proposed, which should be seriously weighed by every member of the Convention, and particularly by those who come from an agricultural section, ere they think for an instant of giving it their approbation and sanction. Upon few subjects, have (at least one portion of) our constituency so deeply reflected, and upon none perhaps have they arrived at conclusions of greater unanimity than upon that policy of internal improvement which has unfortunately characterized much of our past legislation. So long have they been toiling under the burthens imposed by our financial system, and so frequent